

Kaiser Hayward/Fremont Developmental Pediatrics Frequently Asked Questions for Referred Patients

What is a developmental specialist?

Developmental pediatricians specialize in problems relating to the development, learning, and behavior of children. They often work together with other specialists and with schools and other community agencies to better understand a child's capabilities and challenges and to make sure that child is getting what he or she needs to be successful.

What happens when a referral is made?

Once Dr. Sakimura reviews the referral, we mail pre-requisite forms for parents and sometimes teachers. The content of the packet varies depending on the age of the child and the concerns to be addressed. This packet is sent out via certified mail to your home address. Once we receive the completed forms, they are scored and given to our clinic social worker and Dr. Sakimura for review. When the paperwork comes back to the medical assistant (MA) with instruction to schedule, the MA will call parents to schedule an appointment for an evaluation. We will leave the referral open for 30 days to allow parents to fill out the pre-requisite forms. If you encounter any problem with completing the paperwork, please contact us as soon as possible.

Why do you need paperwork before the appointment?

Developmental pediatricians work best when they have access to multiple sources of information in order to take a "step back" and see the "big picture" of the physical, behavioral, developmental, emotional, social, and academic issues that might be affecting a child. Background Information greatly increases the developmental pediatrician's ability to assess a child.

Why is there such a long wait?

There are only about 500 board certified developmental pediatricians in the United States, and 5 of them work within Kaiser of Northern California. Dr. Sakimura takes referrals from all of the Kaiser clinics in Alameda and Contra Costa County. Because of the extensive time needed to provide a quality developmental evaluation, Dr. Sakimura and her colleagues can only see up to 4 new patients per day. This means, unfortunately, that at any given time there can be up to 50-100 patients waiting for their first appointment. In the meantime, please explore the resources on her home page, <http://mydoctor.kaiserpermanente.org/ncal/provider/jeansakimura/>. Click on "Pediatric Health Information" on the right-hand side of the page, under the "Quick Links" section.

How long is this appointment?

New patient appointments generally last about 90 minutes.

Can I take my child's grandparents since they are very involved with my child?

Yes. It is helpful to hear the perspectives of all who take care of your child.

Do both parents have to go?

Although it is helpful to have the perspectives of both parents, we understand the many time constraints that parents face. However, if siblings or other children will be attending the appointment, the presence of a second adult can be very helpful for preventing those children from disrupting the assessment.

Will the doctor talk to us in front of our child?

The developmental pediatrician will often provide opportunities for parents to express their concerns privately. However, for older children and teens, we make every effort to involve them in their own healthcare as much as is appropriate.

What kind of testing will the doctor do?

For younger children, the developmental pediatrician will often do play-based testing to look at such areas of development as communication, hand skills, visual thinking skills, and/or social skills. For older children, the assessments tend to involve less formal testing. This is because the kind of testing required in diagnosing, for example, dyslexia, can only be done by a qualified psychologist such as through the school district.

Will my child get a diagnosis that day?

At the end of the visit, the developmental pediatrician will discuss with parents her findings and recommendations. Sometimes, this means having an actual diagnosis, a single term that describes most of what is going on with a child or teen. However, this is not always the case. With very young children, who are changing rapidly all of the time, we are often looking at a “snapshot” of where a child is that month. Although it can take time to see what is really going on with a child, a developmental assessment can help guide parents, teachers, and others in helping to maximize that child’s progress. For children of preschool age and older, developmental pediatricians often work in concert with other specialists and with schools and other agencies to help obtain a complete picture of what is going on with a child. Sometimes this means that the developmental pediatrician may recommend further evaluation within or outside of Kaiser. At other times, the developmental pediatrician may be able make a diagnosis based on review of the findings of other evaluators along with her own observations. It is also important to keep in mind that it is not always possible for a single diagnostic term (or “label”) to adequately describe what is going on with a child’s behavior and learning.

Can I take food?

Yes. Many families travel a long way to the appointment, and developmental evaluations usually go best when a child is well fed and rested.

If you have any other questions before the appointment, please contact Norma Guzman, Sr. MA at (510) 784-4482.